Towards Rationalizing UNAIDS' Information and Advocacy Materials

UNAIDS
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SUMMARY OF MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The production of information and advocacy materials, particularly publications, has reached a very high volume with far less staff than is normal for such an operation. UNAIDS can be justifiably proud of its achievements in this area. However, the cost in human terms has been so high that the system is now at the point of breakdown.

Although the importance of information and advocacy is recognized, there is a lack of clear policy, within a strategic communication context, on what audiences UNAIDS needs to reach, how, and to what purpose. Publications tend to be supply-driven and the policy vacuum has led to a plethora of generally unfocussed production. There is no body in UNAIDS, as there almost always is in such organizations, to establish publishing policies, priorities and programmes. Nor is there sufficient information on information user's needs to be able to shift towards a demand-driven approach.

The Information Centre is the small end of the funnel into which the Programme pours its publishing requests. There is insufficient understanding of the resource-intensive nature of producing information materials and of the complications inherent in the process, especially when using mainly outside contractors. Such outsourcing is seen by many as a panacea, without taking into account the amount of negotiation, briefing, and supervision that each contract involves. There is a need for self-imposed discipline to improve the quality of texts passed to the Information Centre for processing and to reduce the number of last minute changes that disrupt schedules.

All of the materials being produced are of high quality and doubtless enhance the image of the Programme. Some small problems, e.g. the design of the website and of certain publications were being actively worked on at the time of the Consultant's assignment.

The newsletter *Action Brief,* despite good feedback, has had a start-stop career, which is bad for the Programme's image.

There is an evident need for the Executive Director to have a speechwriter who would work very closely with him and also write speeches for other senior management.

The budgeting methods, and in particular the signing off procedures for the payment of printing contracts, do not follow normal UN procedures and could be criticized during any audit process.

There are a number of options for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the production of information materials. These include: increasing the staffing of the Information Centre; fixing a annual ceiling of the number of pages it is expected to produce; promoting decentralized reproduction and/or adaptation into local languages, with a concomitant reduction in the quantity of centrally produced materials; drawing on materials produced by other organizations and distributing them with the UNAIDS logo with that of the originator; exploring co-publishing ventures with commercial publishers; and taking a new and different look at outsourcing.

The Consultant favours an amalgam of elements from all of these, but with emphasis on decentralizing production to the country or small group of countries level, coupled with a deliberate reduction in the quantity of centrally-produced material and focussing it better.

This decentralization would reduce the load on HQ, but even more important, would lead to more appropriate materials and wider distribution to those who need them.

The future of the post of the Editor/Communications Officer (P5)) in EXR is an important issue. An examination of the core functions of the post reveals that is central to the production and quality control of materials produced by both EXR and PSR. It is difficult to imagine how EXR, and for that matter PSR as well, could manage without it.

The quality control of the Best Practice Collection *Technical Updates* and *Points of View* puts a heavy load on the members of the Best Practice Review Committee, but it provides an important forum for its members to express their views of Programme policies. There appears to be no valid alternative to the Best Practice Review Committee. To achieve more systematic quality control of other high-profile publications, it would be worth setting up a quality control advisory group on a trial basis made up of people in the Programme who are intimately involved in writing and producing publications.

The distribution of the Programme's publications is a weak area. The effort that goes into producing them is not matched by the exposure they get. The mailing list operation is hampered by the fact that there is no focal point of responsibility for it and by a lack of awareness among staff of its importance and of their essential role in contributing to it. The CPA's have no explicitly recognized function as distributors and multipliers of information materials.

Key specific **recommendations** are:

➢ Create a Programme Information Materials Committee (PIMC) which should, initially, make proposals - for senior management approval - on policies and strategies for the production and distribution of materials. Within these parameters, it should then provide overall and ongoing programming for the production of materials, selecting and ordering priorities, and keeping an oversight of the progress and problems.

➢ Conduct an information user survey in, say, six countries, using local institutions and an approach based on qualitative research.

➢ Investigate the feasibility of launching an electronic newsletter to replace the *Action Brief,* using an outside writer. If it is decided to proceed, ensure sustainable funding for the operation.

➢ Recruit a speechwriter to work primarily for the Executive Director but also to write speeches for other senior management. Given the problems that often occur between speechwriters and their executives, it would be appropriate to recruit the person on an 11-month basis, at least initially.

➢ Look into the budgeting procedures for the production of documents, particularly for printing, and establish a system that conforms to UN system norms.

➢ Take measures to establish a more rational *modus operandi* for the planning and production of printed materials through, *inter alia*:

• Setting a ceiling of the number of pages the Information Centre is expected to produce annually;

- Establishing, through the PIMC, different levels of importance and therefore treatment of the various types of document;

- Having the PIMC solicit proposals for publications from the various departments at the beginning of each year, with additions and cancellations at quarterly intervals. All proposals should specify the target audience and the purpose, and also provide information on other existing publications on the same topic and a rationale for why UNAIDS should produce another;

- Having the PIMC prioritize the proposals for documents, placing the relatively few absolutely essential publications (e.g. for major conferences, World AIDS Day) in a first category, and also prioritizing second category documents in so far as possible. The PIMC should only programme about 80 percent of the number of pages that can be produced annually, leaving the remainder for inevitable and unforeseeable needs;

- Decentralizing by promoting the reproduction of UNAIDS documents in local languages on a country or small group of countries basis. Promote adaptation of UNAIDS materials to local needs, leaving all quality control for reproduction/adaptation at the country level. Adapted materials should use the Programme's logo but have a disclaimer next to it stating that the content is the responsibility of the producer;

- Trying more systematically to identify documents produced by others that could be 'adopted' by the Programme and distributed jointly with the producer. Look into joint publishing with commercial educational publishing houses;

- Exploring the possibility of outsourcing the storage and distribution of documents.

➢ Strengthen the Information Centre through the addition of an English-language editor and the upgrading of the post of its team Leader.

➢ Recognize the crucial role of the Editor/Communications Officer (P5) in EXR in the production and quality control of documents for both EXR and PSR, and when the post becomes vacant, fill it with the best possible person. Provide him/her with core status in the interests of the need for continuity and for institutional memory in the post.

➢ Include the dissemination and multiplying of UNAIDS materials in the job descriptions of CPAs.

➢ Issue guidelines to staff on the role of each and every person in supporting the creation and maintenance of a good mailing list. Create a focal point of responsibility for the mailing lists.

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Consultancy

UNAIDS can be justifiably proud of its achievements in the area of advocacy and information. In 1998, the Programme turned out 115 publications, and in the first nine months of 1999, no less than 140 were produced. By any standards, this is truly an enormous output in relation to the staff resources employed. Without doubt, the advocacy and the information output of the Programme have played a major role in building its corporate image.

However, the cost in human terms of this success have been high, and it now seems that the writing, production, and distribution of UNAIDS advocacy and information materials have reached a defining moment. For in essence, the present situation is unsustainable owing to the pressure it causes. It therefore requires serious consideration and some new policy directions, coupled with a modified *modus operandi*.

A second point, and linked to the above, is that two key persons in the process will be leaving the Programme shortly, the Team Leader of the Information Centre and the Editor/Communications Officer (P5) in EXR.

The general expectation among Programme staff is that there will be an increase in demand for information material. Thus, the situation surrounding its production and distribution could deteriorate rather than improve.

The consultancy was set against this background and against the frankly disordered manner in which the demand for information materials and publications has escalated until it has reached the present point of near breakdown.

Terms of Reference for the Consultancy

The terms of reference for the consultancy were very broad (See Annexe 1) and could easily have occupied a consultant for many more than the 25 days foreseen. Therefore, an early meeting was held jointly with EXR and PSR, the two sponsoring Departments for the consultancy, to establish its main priorities. It was generally agreed that documenting the volume and scope of the advocacy and information activities, setting them in the context of the Programme's policies and the staff resources devoted to them, and rationalizing the Information Centre's work were the prime concerns.

Working Methods

The Consultant examined the full range of publications and other printed materials produced by EXR and PSR and explored the Programme's website. He also had a series of interviews with staff of the Programme and in-depth discussions with those most directly involved in the production and distribution of materials. (See Annexe 2 for list of staff consulted).

The analysis looked basically at four aspects of information and its dissemination: **policy, implementation, quality control,** and **distribution**. The structure of this report will follow these same four categories.

Acknowledgements

1. POLICY ISSUES

1.1 Recognition of the Importance of Advocacy and Information

There is little need to make the case for the central role of information and advocacy in the Programme's work. Among the six broad objectives of the ECOSOC resolution of 1994 which established the Programme, two exclusively concern advocacy and political/social mobilization. Two of the others – namely strengthening a) the capacity of the UN system and b) the capacity of national Governments in the areas of policies, strategies, and implementation of HIV/AIDS effective activities – hold an implicit but key role for the generation and dissemination of information.

As the Programme has developed, the emphasis on information and advocacy, and recognition of their importance, have tended to increase. This is logical if one considers that the remit of the Programme is essentially one of stimulating and facilitating action by others rather than acting itself. Advocacy and the dissemination of information must, therefore, play the central role in such an approach.

> *It has become increasingly apparent over UNAIDS' first year that management of information is at the core of many of its functions.*
>
> **Report of the Executive Director to the Programme Coordinating Board 7-9 April 1997**
>
> *The paradox facing the world during the 1996-1997 biennium was that although people the world over acknowledged the HIV epidemic as being more serious than they had previously believed, the response was hampered by a growing sense of complacency.*
>
> *...UNAIDS uses two equally important and mutually reinforcing strategies. First, it seeks to build worldwide commitment and political support for the response to the epidemic through advocacy based on the most current information and technically sound analysis. Second, it seeks to improve access and use of the best and most effective practices in responding to the epidemic.*
>
> **UNAIDS Progress Report 1996-1997 (p. 7)**

1.2 UNAIDS' Advocacy and Information in a Context of Strategic Communication

Taking an overall view of the fight against the HIV/AIDS epidemic, there are many different audience segments that need to be reached. In some cases, information is required to facilitate attitudinal and behavioural change at various levels, from politicians to individuals in society, while in other cases, information is needed for developing polices and strategies and for enhancing knowledge and skills. In effect, the full range is from information and advocacy with policy-makers and funding

agencies, through more technical and practical information for health cadres and NGOs, right down to the community level in such areas as prevention and care.

The Programme can obviously not take on this whole gamut of communication activities, but it should see its advocacy and information work in this overall context. And whatever it does should fit into this complete pattern and, where possible, have a positive effect in helping others to communicate with the various audience sectors that the Programme itself cannot hope to reach, especially the community level. The Consultant has taken this overall strategic communication view in considering the advocacy and information activities of UNAIDS.

1.3   Working in an Information Policy Vacuum

> *There is too much information and it is unfocussed. Our target groups are undefined. Who are we feeding with information? Are we trying to help the operational level? Or decision-makers? I am confused about what is expected from me – like everybody.*
>
> **Comment by Staff Member**

Despite the evident importance of advocacy and of information dissemination, the Programme's policies and strategies for the development, production, and distribution of materials have not yet been clearly defined.

During discussions with Programme staff, many examples of this policy vacuum emerged. For example, there is no general agreement on what audiences the Programme should be trying to reach with its information, through what means, and to what purpose.

However, a few of those most closely concerned with the BPC do have a clearer view. They state that they are trying to reach: senior officials in governments, in major NGOs, and in companies; AIDS policy-makers and opinion leaders; and programme managers and technicians in developed and developing countries. While the majority of staff would probably agree with this, it has never been formulated as policy. Hence, there are staff who make comments like the one quoted in the box above; and there are also activities planned, such as one for the Care Team for 2000-2001, which includes information for the 'community level'.

> *One of UNAIDS basic roles is to be a broker of knowledge and to facilitate information exchange. This service needs to function well and have truly good distribution. It is resource intensive and it is not sufficiently appreciated [by the rest of the staff]. Nor is it using its resources in the most effective way.*
>
> **One of several comments in similar sense by staff members**

There was no lack of appreciation among staff of the importance of advocacy and information for the Programme, but there were quite wide differences of opinion concerning the policy and operational aspects.

One interviewee was of the opinion that the information output had got off on the wrong foot and that UNAIDS should be acting much more as a clearing house for information produced by others, taking the best of it and in agreement with the producer, applying the Programme's imprimatur to it. Another had a similar idea in the sense of the Programme being 'less egocentric' about material on HIV/AIDS and promoting also materials produced by cosponsors or others.   There were a number of staff who expressed opinions to the effect that the information output needed to be better focussed.

The question of the appropriate balance between, or the complementarity of, electronic information via the web with physical publications has not yet been fully addressed. Although the recent evaluation of the Best Practices Collection identified that there is a general preference for printed materials, getting them out to the appropriate people in the numbers required is difficult and costly. So, in concrete terms, to what extent could or should the UNAIDS website and other means such as CD-ROMs complement hard publications? And should the Programme invest in providing Internet access to key players in countries where such access is difficult or expensive? Or could Information Centres be established where necessary to help with the downloading of materials?

The Consultant believes that in the coming years, there will need to be a shift in balance towards more electronic distribution of information, even if printed documents will continue to play a role, especially for prestigious publications aimed at senior government officials.

Nor have policy guidelines been established regarding the quantity of material – numbers of titles and copies of each - that should and can be produced. Several aspects need to be taken into account in considering the appropriate quantity. They include demand from users, availability of funds, and the human resource capacity to produce them or have them produced. The evaluation of the Best Practice Collection highlighted that there were generally insufficient copies of the documents to meet the needs. Anecdotal evidence from Programme staff also exists to the effect that UNAIDS materials are snapped up and quickly exhausted whenever they are displayed at a conference or meeting.

An overall result of the lack of an agreed policy and of respected operational guidelines is that the production of materials is forced to suffer from crisis management. By nature, this type of work tends to run into crisis situations, for it is complicated and many things can go wrong in the multi-step process of taking a writer's work and transforming it into an attractive printed document, perhaps in several languages. However, sound policies and procedures can make the process much smoother.

1.4   Major Spending Requires Sound Policies and Management

The resources being devoted to advocacy and information activities merits attention, although it is in fact difficult to arrive at the total figure for the cost. For the coming biennium, the combined budgets of the Communication/Public Information Unit (EXR) and the Information Centre (PSR) come to a total of US$ 7,793 million. These are the visible costs for staff, activities, editing, translation, etc. and they represent less than less than 8 percent of the Programme's total resources. However, there are additional hidden costs, mainly for staff time and for printing, paid by departments and teams, which are difficult to measure.

The accepted wisdom is that the Programme spends some 25 percent of its total budget on advocacy and information, a figure cited also in the BPC evaluation. But how this figure of 25 percent was reached does not appear to be documented - though this is not to say that it is incorrect.

And if that figure of 25 percent is more or less right, it will equate to well over US$30 million for the next biennium, with the visible costs of the Information Centre and the Communication/Public Information Unit accounting for only US$ 7,793 million of this. By any standards, and most certainly by UN standards, this is major expenditure and

business. It is therefore incumbent upon the Programme to ensure that the operation is staffed and managed appropriately.

Overall, the Programme without doubt spends a higher proportion of its total budget on information and advocacy than do most UN bodies or programmes, but this is logical given the UNAIDS mandate. Whether more or less is devoted to this work is a question for the senior management. What is of concern is whether UNAIDS is getting the best value for the money it spends now. Without a policy focus on central issues (e.g. the definition of audiences, what information to reach them with, and how), or sound operational procedures, or a well-planned and constantly updated distribution system, it is almost certainly not.

In almost every institution that gathers, generates, and disseminates information and conducts advocacy, there is some sort of committee to establish and ensure the implementation of policies and procedures that will give the best chance of effectively reaching the institution's target audiences. At the same time, the committee establishes operational guidelines that will allow for the most efficient and cost effective use of the human and financial resources devoted to producing and disseminating materials.

According to one interviewee, there were discussions about creating such a committee in the early days of the Programme, but they came to nothing. The information output of the Programme is now so important and large that the creation of such a committee should not be left in abeyance any longer. The Consultant has never come across an organization, in which information management is considered important, that does not have a committee to set policy and operational guidelines in this area.

Recommendation 1

A Programme Information Materials Committee (PIMC) should be created to become operational as soon as possible. The Best Practice Task Team was abolished in April 1999, but basically it could be resurrected with expanded responsibilities and membership.

The PIMC should be made up of 6-8 staff members from various departments/groups, but should also include members with specific knowledge and competence in the area of information and materials production. Thus, it should obviously include the Manager, Communication and Public Information, and the Team Leader of the Information Centre (which should provide the secretariat for the PIMC). It should also include at least one other person with high level responsibility in the area of information, e.g. the writer of Best Practice in PSR.

The PIMC should have two basic responsibilities:

- Initially, draw up proposals, for senior management approval, on policies and strategies on which to base the production and distribution of materials as hardcopy or electronically.

- Within the policy and strategy parameters it establishes, provide overall programming of the production of materials by: selecting and ordering priorities; keeping an oversight of progress and problems; making periodic adjustments in the production plan; adjudicating in cases of competing demands on the Information

Centre that cannot all be reasonably satisfied all at the same time; and generally ensuring that publication functions are centralized and coordinated within the Programme.

Initially, the PIMC would need to meet quite frequently to fulfil its policy formulation functions, possibly twice a month. The raw material it should have to help in its discussions should be the recent evaluation of the BPC and the results of an information user survey proposed in Recommendation 2 below.

The policy and strategy guidelines drawn up by the PIMC should be approved by the Executive Director and his senior management team and then made known to all of the staff.

The meetings of the PIMC to prioritize and approve proposals for the production of materials should be quarterly, but with the possibility of holding an unscheduled meeting if there is some crisis situation that requires it. (This quarterly time frame is the usual practice in other organizations).

Departments should make their proposals for publications to the PIMC, providing information on the target audience for the publication, its purpose, its approximate length, estimated costs, source of funds, and what other materials already exist on the same topic.

Although the PIMC should not have authority with respect to the funding of publications, the budget information requested in the proposal is to provide it with an overview of expenditures on publications and an assurance that funds are indeed available to support a given proposal.

The PIMC should be open to call in other staff as necessary for discussions on particular aspects of materials production and distribution, or on a specific proposal for a publication. The workings of the PIMC should avoid creating an image of an authoritarian group that turns its thumbs up or down on proposals for publications for its own esoteric reasons; rather, it should strive for transparency in its decisions, stressing that they are based on established policy and strategy for information materials and on available production capacity. It is to be hoped that over time, the PIMC and its work would have an indirect function in the orientation and education of staff in matters of information materials and their production.

The Programme should consider calling in a consultant on a when-actually-employed basis for a total of 2-3 months in the year 2,000 to help establish the PIMC, assisting with, *inter alia,* the drafting of its terms of reference, deciding on its composition and working methods, and generally helping during its running in period.

N.B. The PIMC should take over the present role of the Programme Review Committee in respect of publications; there is no point in having both Committees involved.

For more details of the proposed working methods of the PIMC, see also Recommendation 7.

The Consultant understands that even before the PIMC is established and operational, key Programme staff intend to begin working harder in the New Year on a Department by Department basis – starting with EXR and PSR and the main report for the Durban 2000 Conference – to plan and rationalize the publications production schedule.

2.   IMPLEMENTATION

2.1   An Overview of the Present Situation

2.1.1 *Supply-driven or Demand-driven?*

It is a commonly held view among Programme staff that the output of materials is determined by the Programme's <u>own</u> perception of the needs of those working in HIV/AIDS, hence they comment that the production of materials is essentially supply-driven. This point was also made in the evaluation of the Best Practices Collection. Indeed, the issue of supply- versus demand-driven applies mainly to the BPC because advocacy materials naturally tend to be more supply-driven.

> *[As in the academic world] publish or perish is the imperative around here. You could say we are supply-driven.*
>
> **Comment by Staff Member**

Clearly, information that meets people's real needs is bound to attract more attention and be more effective than that which does not, or does so only partially. And with the large amount of information on HIV/AIDS being produced, there is always the risk of overlaps, but also gaps, in what people working in HIV/AIDS truly need.

> *It is quite possible that the [Best Practices) Collection is driven by reactive responses to immediate needs or by interests of particular staff. Policy and strategy development for the BPC including the establishment of clear objectives and priorities would appear to be a pressing need.*
>
> **Evaluation Report of BPC**

This is not to say that there is any actual evidence of the Programme producing overlapping materials. And some materials are certainly produced as a result of demand, e.g. many of those in Russian, though this has nothing to do with the content or format. In any case, it is always extremely useful for the programming of information outputs to have insights into users' perceptions and needs.

The evaluation of the BPC already provides some valuable data about people's perceptions about these materials, but is it enough? The Consultant thinks it is probably not enough for a shift towards more demand-driven information.

In itself, the evaluation of the BPC is excellent, but it correctly limited itself to evaluating existing materials without going into what else or what alternatives were felt to be necessary.

To introduce a demand-driven aspect would require a more open-ended survey, based on qualitative information of the sort that can only be gathered during face to face interviews or small group discussions, especially focus group discussions.

Telephone interviews and e-mail questionnaires, although valuable, have limitations, and the BPC evaluation originally intended to follow up with two country visits.

The Consultant believes that these two country visits should be replaced by **a small survey of information user's needs using a more open-ended and qualitative approach to the one used in the BPC evaluation**. This could provide a clearer focus on the information activities, and make a start along the path towards Programme information materials that are more demand-driven. This proposal is expanded on in Recommendation 2 below.

Recommendation 2

The Programme should conduct a survey among the users of information on HIV/AIDS and its ramifications. It has become current practice to conduct surveys through questionnaires sent by e-mail, and this method could form part of the survey. However, it should not replace on-site work, for e-mail surveys tend to lead to rapid factual replies, which although useful, do not include the consideration and reflection that can be stimulated by good discussions with small focus groups.

It is proposed that three countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, one in Asia, one in Latin America/Caribbean, and one in Eastern Europe be selected.

This survey should be conducted by local institutions in the various countries. They should be institutions with experience in qualitative research and in focus group discussion methods. They should conduct the surveys in close cooperation with, and beginning with, the CPA and Theme Groups, and from there move to national health personnel working in HIV/AIDS at the central and decentralized (e.g. provincial) level and to some key NGOs, especially those with an umbrella function in the country. Group discussions should be complemented by some key informant interviews, especially with senior people.

The information that should be sought by the survey should include, *inter alia*, the following:

- What is the access to the Programme's information output and what is users' relative use of electronic information and physical documents?

- What use, including multiplication, is being made of existing information disseminated by the Programme?

- Where access to the Internet is difficult or expensive, what would users feel about the Programme facilitating access, and how should it be done in practice?

- Does the UNAIDS information output meet their needs as they see them, if so why and how, and if not why not?

- What other types of information would they, ideally, like to receive to enhance their work in HIV/AIDS, and how should it be delivered?

- What role do they think they could play in translating, adapting, and distributing UNAIDS information, and what would they need to help them?

- What are the perceived trends in the demand for information materials?

Two working weeks would be required from each of the local institutions. They should be asked to apply classic focus group discussion methodology, that is to say: 6-10 persons per group; the persons in each group to be as homogeneous as possible in terms of their levels of responsibility and functions; a facilitator who knows how to stimulate a discussion among the group rather than with him/her; and an observer to take notes. The facilitator should have sample copies of some of the Programme's principal publications to hand around to the group and to help the discussion along.

The survey should involve some 10-12 focus group discussions in total per country, plus 5-6 key informant interviews. (Normally with qualitative research using focus groups one continues conducting them until a definite tendency in the opinions expressed becomes evident. In the experience of the Consultant, 3-4 groups from each sector are normally enough for this trend to emerge).

One of the local institutions could be asked to pull together the reports of the discussions and draw up the overall conclusions, or this could be done by a consultant in Geneva.

These conclusions should be made available to CPAs in countries not surveyed with the request that they discuss them in their Theme Group and with national institutions and advise whether, in broad terms, they consider the conclusions are also valid for their particular country, and if not, why not. A few additional surveys could be conducted later if necessary.

This proposal for an information needs survey could be floated with key CPA's in different regions. Their ideas about suitable countries and local institutions should be sought.

2.1.2   The Information Centre is the Small End of a Funnel

The Information Centre has established procedures, (e.g. its Document Production Form) to try to facilitate the flow of its work and to satisfy its 'clients' better. But unfortunately, many Programme staff, perhaps because they do not understand the complexity and resource-intensive nature of the work involved, or do not respect the professional skills it requires, look on the Information Centre as a service that is at their sole bidding and cannot comprehend why things take "so long". The relatively low hierarchical level of the staff of the Information Centre, and the fact that its Team Leader has reported to four different supervisors in the space of 12 months, have kept the Information Centre at a low level of institutional support and respect for its procedures.

This situation, together with the lack of policy direction for publications, produce problems that mainly come home to roost in the Information Centre, which is forced to work under stressful time pressures, using outside contractors over whom there is limited control. And this situation is counter-productive in the final analysis, for the output is not sustainable.

When the Programme was originally established, publications – apart from press materials - were not foreseen as being one of its core elements, but they have become just that. It is therefore not surprising that the activity has grown in an *ad hoc* way and has to navigate, without guidance from policy and procedural beacons, from one time crisis to the next in order to meet looming deadlines.

The Team Leader of the Information Centre now reports to an Associate Director of PSR who is supportive. But in practice, he also needs to be able to defend and reinforce occasional messages from the Information Centre to clients on impending deadlines, on the risks of not meeting them, on turning down last minute changes, on unreasonable requests, and so on.

Unfortunately, the Associate Director of PSR is working in the same policy vacuum when it comes to decisions about publications priorities and resolving logjams - the blind leading the blind without recourse to arbitration based on policy and strategy. And this is another reason for the recommendation to create the PIMC.

2.1.3   The Steps in Producing a Publication

The present difficult situation also appears to be aggravated by a widespread lack of understanding among Programme staff of the processes that produce a high-quality publication in several languages that they can be proud of and which meets the Programme's needs.

For this reason, the Team Leader of the Information Centre produced and distributed a note, entitled *Getting Published,* in August 1997 to brief staff on the various steps involved in producing high-quality documents, including likely times required for each stage, costs, etc. His aim was to smooth the process of document production and to try to obtain better quality original texts for his Centre to process. In addition, a session on getting published and the role of the Information Centre is included in the induction briefing of new staff, but these sessions have usually been poorly attended, especially by the more senior newcomers. Thus, neither the briefing note nor the briefing sessions have had the desired effect. Attendance at the briefing session should be mandatory for new staff, given the importance and size of the publication programme.

It is certainly worth outlining again here the many, detailed, and time-consuming steps involved in the production of a publication in several languages. (See text box on next page). For each of these steps under an outsourcing regime, suitable service providers have to be **identified,** their **interest and availability ascertained,** and a **contract drawn up.**

2.1.4   Running a High Risk of Failure

It should be clear from the above and from the text box on the next page that there are innumerable opportunities for the production of a publication to run amuck. Arrangements have to be made in advance with outside contractors for each of the steps, and since they have other clients too, they need to arrange their work schedules accordingly and reserve a time-slot for each job. A delay in delivering a text to an outside contractor can easily result in the contractor having to withdraw from the assignment.

Furthermore, at many stages in the production process there is often a need for clarifications. For example, a good editor, or translator too, will often raise queries that need attention from the subject-matter specialist or the author. Delays in obtaining these clarifications can throw a production completely off schedule and cause weekend and night work to catch up. Other common causes of possible derailments are delays in obtaining clearances (for anything from photographs to the approval of cosponsors), lack of staff in-house to incorporate changes in time-sensitive texts such as

press releases, and non-delivery or protracted discussions about logos and design for joint publications.

THE PUBLICATIONS PROCESS

➤ **Editing** - Any material for publication by any organization always requires editing. All authors and professional writers expect to be edited.

An editor goes through a text looking for:

- Cogency – does the typescript have a logical structure and argument? Is the text relevant or repetitious?

- Clarity – is the language direct and clear? Are explanations given of technical terms?

- Consistency – is the text internally consistent? Do statements and figures in one part tally with those in other parts?

On the basis of these considerations, the editor may make – or suggest to the author – substantial alterations.

➤ **Revision for Technical and Policy Accuracy** – Any organization dealing with a complex subject - and in the case of UNAIDS a delicate one too – inevitably conducts rigorous in-house checking of documents for their technical and policy accuracy. This process, as well as taking up staff resources, can become time-consuming if and when some particular point in a document leads to an internal debate.

➤ **Copy-editing, or sub-editing** - Once the main editing has been done, the copy editor checks for the correct use of language and ensures that house style is followed. Depending on the size of the operation, the editor and copy-editor may be the same or separate persons. The Information Centre tries to use the same person in the interests of speed, though in practice much editing work has been done by the Team Leader of the Information Centre outside normal office hours because of the time pressures and of the need to check the work of outside contractors.

➤ **Design/layout** - The final edited text is given to an outside desktop publishing (DTP) unit for design and layout.

➤ **Printing of proofs of original version**

➤ **Translation** - The proofs of the original language version are passed to contracted translators

➤ **Revision of translations** – The translated texts need to be revised for quality and for consistency with the original version.

➤ **Design/layout of translations** – The translated versions have to go back to the DTP unit for layout and impagination because of different language lengths, e.g. French and Spanish are longer than English.

➤ **Printing of translated versions**

➤ **Checking and correction of all proofs and return to printer for final production**

➤ **Packaging and preparing publications for dispatch by WHO**

➤ **Stock control and management**

2.1.5 A Need for Self-Imposed Discipline

Last minute changes to texts are a prime cause of delays, staff frustration, and increased costs. One staff member stated that there are certain circumstances that will almost always call for last minute changes in a text. He specifically mentioned that

statistical data in electronic form can be difficult to manage for a publication and that tables based on such data are particularly prone to errors that need last-minute corrections. This is certainly true, and of course there need to be allowances and flexibility built into the system.

On the other hand, it also seems that staff request last minute changes because not enough attention was given by the author and Team Leader to producing a satisfactory text in the first place, and before it was passed to the Information Centre as "cleared for publication". On other occasions, there is a desire to phrase a sentence differently or provide a different interpretation to a statistic.

Requests for special cover designs to be done by an outside DTP unit and which depart from the established norms are yet another cause of problems and delays, not to mention possible negative effects on the corporate image.

When changes are requested after the design/layout by the outside DTP unit has been done, the typical charge is SFr. 110 per hour of work for the modifications. If changes are requested even later, once the proofs have been put on Ozalid® by the printer, each single change will typically cost SFr. 30. In addition, of course, there are costs in terms of time and staff stress.

In fact, anyone objectively contemplating the numerous steps and the need for orderly scheduling with outside contractors will realize that non-essential last minute changes can cause enormous problems, which not only affect the publication in question but which can easily have repercussions on the whole production system. There is, therefore, a need for greater self-imposed discipline among those using the services of the Information Centre in order to prepare better initial texts and to avoid last minute changes to the absolute maximum extent possible.

2.1.6 The Less Visible Work of the Information Centre

In addition to the noteworthy output of publications, the Information Centre also does a number of things that are barely visible to the rest of the Programme. One example is its recent production of a glossary – in three languages and shortly to be expanded to four - of 900 terms related to HIV/AIDS, and with a further 300 terms under review. This is now on the UNAIDS website. Another example is its work in identifying institutions in many countries that could become Information Support Centres. It has already identified 13 such institutions mainly in Asian countries and is planning as assessment of possibilities and needs in 10 Eastern European countries.

2.1.7 The Volume of Production

In 1998, the Information Centre's production of 115 documents totalling just over 3,000 pages. In the first nine months of 1999, the 140 documents produced totalled about 3,600 pages.[1] Many of these productions were fraught with problems, mainly caused by institutional failures such as lack of authority of the Information Centre in the

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[1] These figures and those in the box concerning other UN bodies provide an idea of the order of magnitude rather than precise statistics. For it is difficult to make exact comparisons when materials range from flyers, posters, and journals to books that may run into hundreds of pages.

hierarchy and lack of observance of what would usually be considered publishing norms and procedures. (See the descriptions of some typical cases in Annexe 3).

The staffing of the Information Centre consists of two professional posts[2] and five general service staff on various types of short contracts. The Centre is also responsible for the time-consuming task of preparing documents for dispatch.

It will be evident from the information in the box on the right that the Information Centre produces far more with many fewer staff than some other UN bodies sampled for this consultancy.

Good outsourcing has made this possible. At present, in fact, virtually all of the work of producing publications is being contracted out to editors, translators, revisers, graphic designers, and printers.

> *The **FAO** Publications Group has a Chief, 8 language editors and its own highly sophisticated desktop publishing unit. It also outsources translation and editorial services and printing. It produces about 100 titles per year.*
>
> *In **ILO**, the Publications Bureau has a chief and 9 editors and support staff totalling 31 people to produce some 30 book titles a year and a quarterly journal.*
>
> *In **WHO** last year, there were a Publications coordinator and five editors for the production of some 30 titles. Restructuring this year has reduced the editors to two, but the intention is to try to publish the same number of titles.*

However, it should be particularly noted that outsourcing is too easily seen as the panacea for all in-house staff limitations, without apparently appreciating the real work outsourcing involves. This includes: finding and choosing suitable contractors who are willing and available to work under the terms and conditions being offered; obtaining quotations; initiating contractual arrangements; briefing and discussing the details of the task; controlling the quality of the end product; and if necessary, working further with the contractor to bring the job up to standard. Thus, outsourcing is also limited by the availability of in-house staff to manage the processes.

Objectively seen, the work of the very small Information Centre in getting so many quality documents out in the last couple of years is truly remarkable, especially in comparison with the higher levels of staffing that would more usually be in place for such an operation.

2.1.8 Problems and Staff Resources in the Information Centre

The problems in the Information Centre stem essentially from the aforementioned lack of policy and planning in respect of publications, and a symptom of that lack is the inadequate staffing of the Centre. While it is evident to anyone spending time in the UNAIDS offices that the staff of the Programme in general work extremely hard and for long hours, the production of documents is putting untenable pressure on the very few people involved in the process.

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[2] In 1998, there was only one professional post in the Information Centre. The second was approved for 1999, but only on a short-term (11-month) basis.

All documents for editing, translating and printing come to the Information Centre and as already shown, it is very short-staffed compared to other agencies or programmes. And very tight production schedules are often imposed on it. After the present Team Leader's departure, planned for December 14, the situation will become very precarious and could well result in decreased output and additional problems until a replacement is on board. Programme staff will need to realize that, with the best will in the world, the sole remaining professional after the Team Leader leaves will not be able to handle the present volume of work.

> *UNCTAD's normal time frame for producing a publication is a minimum of 14 weeks from the delivery of the typescript through the various stages to having the printed versions in hand; the Information Centre is often expected to turn out publications in much less time.*

Apart from the problems caused in UNAIDS itself by the present situation, it seems that some of the outside contractors are becoming reluctant to work under the pressure exerted on them by the Information Centre. Clearly, if this tendency accelerates, it could have very serious consequences for the production of UNAIDS publications.

2.1.9 *The Appearance and Quality of UNAIDS Publications*

The appearance and quality of publications is a question of taste. The Consultant found the Programme's publications to have an attractive appearance and a good feel about them, and he therefore considers that they present a good image of the Programme. In addition, there is an established consistency about their visual style, which at this point should only be tampered with when there is reason to do so to improve their communicational effectiveness. Taste criteria should not be allowed to dictate changes to what has now become a corporate identity.

There are some design weaknesses, especially with regard to making the language of a document immediately recognizable from its cover. And *Technical Updates* and *Points of View* are so similar that it requires a double take to distinguish between them. However, at the time of the Consultant's assignment, these matters were being attended to by a designer.

The quality of the paper used is excellent and in mot cases is almost certainly justified in the interests of the image of the Programme. Its cost is only slightly higher than a high-quality bond paper, but it is about 15 percent heavier. This adds to transport and distribution costs. For some really thick publications, such as the BP Summary Booklet, the use of bond paper to save 15 percent of its weight would be advisable.

2.1.10 *The Website*

The Programme's website at the time the Consultant was in Geneva suffered from several quite serious defects. It was not user-friendly for people not fully conversant with web procedures; it had too many graphics, which made it slow and difficult to download where the quality of the Internet access was faulty e.g. poor telephone lines; to make it accessible to Microsoft Explorer and Netscape browsers, there were two versions of the website, and since they were not always updated simultaneously, there were often two slightly different versions of the site at any one time.

Fortunately, the recently arrived Webmaster, working with an advisory group, resolved these problems. The new home page - launched on November 23 and after the Consultant had left Geneva - is far more practical and user friendly than the old one. And the reduction of graphics will make downloading easier.

2.1.11 Public Information Materials

The Communication and Public Information Unit of EXR puts out a large range and number of public information materials. The bulk of these consist of major reports e.g. *UNAIDS Report, World AIDS Day Report, AIDS Epidemic Updates*, and joint publications with co-sponsors, such as the one with UNICEF entitled *Children Orphaned by AIDS: Front-line Responses from Eastern and Southern Africa*.

In addition, the Unit produces brochures, question and answer and background briefing papers, encyclopaedia entries, articles for the signature of the Executive Director, exhibits, videos, photographs, talking points for the media, and training materials.

Special projects such as newspaper supplements e.g. one with the *International Herald Tribune*, and joint ventures with TV channels are also undertaken.

EXR also puts out about 5 press releases a month on average. There appear to be no real problems with this operation. Initially, Departments sometimes wanted press releases on matters that were not sufficiently newsworthy to be of any use to the media. However, there is now general acceptance of the judgement of the Manager, Communication and Public Information, as to whether the matter warrants a press release. The press releases are routinely translated into French and Russian through the Information Centre. CPAs have recently been expressing an increasing need for Spanish translations.

All of this, coupled with other the materials produced by the Communication and Public Information Unit (see next section) represents an enormous work output. The Unit is thinly staffed for it compared to the level of staffing one would normally expect to find in such a UN operation.

2.1.12 Materials for the World AIDS Campaign

These materials, produced by EXR, are high quality, attractive, and distributed in relatively large numbers – 10,000 English, 6,000 French, 4,000 Spanish. There is also demand for versions in Russian and Arabic for the future. However, here too there are difficulties and delays in the production. Some of the 1999 campaign material went through no less than 14 drafts.

This year's initiative to distribute the materials on CD-ROM as well, but on request, warrants careful observation and the prompting of feedback from recipients. If they find it valuable and put it to good use, it could indicate a wider potential for distributing high quality materials at low cost.

2.1.13 The Question of Staff in EXR

This boils down essentially to the question of the Editor/Communications Officer post (P5), which the present incumbent is vacating at the end of January 2000.

The original job description for that post was written before the Programme got under way, and it is therefore not surprising that some of it's foreseen functions have developed and assumed greater importance than have others.

Essentially, the **core functions** of the post at present have evolved to be:

- <u>**Overview of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the Programme**</u>: keeping abreast of policy development and technical issues in the epidemic and in UNAIDS.

- <u>**Quality control**</u>: in the light of this evolving knowledge, ensuring the policy/technical conformity of all press materials, other high-profile EXR materials, important Programme-wide materials, PSR materials (as member of BPC Clearance Group, by delegation from Director EXR), and selected materials from other UNAIDS departments and from Cosponsors, and deciding when a text needs further clearance by another UNAIDS staff member.

- <u>**Input into key events/publications:**</u> suggesting topics, speakers, themes, issues, special angles, e.g. for World AIDS Campaigns, WHO's one-day seminar on AIDS as part of EXPO2000, the special supplement on AIDS to be published with the *International Herald Tribune*, etc.

- <u>**Writing**</u>: preparing technical and epidemiological reports, brochures about the Programme, press materials, and articles, editorials and encyclopaedia entries on behalf of Executive Director.

- <u>**Revision/finalization:**</u> editing/rewriting/finalizing materials drafted by other writers.

- <u>**Revision of texts translated into French**</u>

- <u>**Some Speechwriting for Executive Director**</u>

In effect, **the post is central to the writing of EXR materials and to quality control of the information output by both EXT and PSR**. In the case of PSR, the post provides crucial support to the BPC, working very closely with the PSR's Best Practice writer.

It is extremely hard to imagine how EXR could function without this post if the present levels of activities of EXR are to be maintained. Furthermore, the post provides services of inestimable value to PSR as well.

Recommendation 3

The crucial role of the Editor/Communications Officer (P5) needs to be recognized and all efforts made to fill it with the best possible person. Given the importance of building up continuity and institutional memory, and the need to offer the most attractive package possible, this post should continue to have core status. However, external consultants can hardly make detailed recommendations in respect of how posts might be juggled within the Programme to ensure that the functions of the post in question are properly covered.

2.1.14 Newsletter – The Action Brief

The *Action Brief* is generally thought to perform a useful function. There has been good feedback on it, but it is not being produced at present. It was the responsibility of the Office of the Director, EXR, and the actual writing and the layout were done by a member of the Donor and Corporate Relations Group.

The research, writing and layout were taking up about a week of working time per issue. EXR were prepared to spend UUS$1,400 for the writing and layout of the newsletter and a further CHF 2,000 for the printing of 2000 copies, bringing the annual cost for 12 issues to about US$35,000. Unfortunately, it proved difficult to find a freelance person to do the writing and layout. In effect, it is not easy to find writing and layout skills in a single person, and even if one can, the person may not be able to commit to 5-6 days a month, or every two months, spread over several weeks. Outsourcing the newsletter is therefore not an easy solution, though it is nevertheless worth trying.

There is a commonly held opinion that the Programme should produce just one more number of the *Action Brief* this year. That issue should also announce the closure of the newsletter in favour of efforts next year to set up an electronic version in its place.

While on the subject of newsletters, it should be noted that UNAIDS – APICT started producing a quarterly one in October 1999 entitled *get A PICTure*. It consists of eight pages and is well produced.

Recommendation 4.

The Consultant supports the production of one more number of the *Action Brief* this year, in part at least for the sake of orderliness and its clean termination, rather than having it simply disappear without trace.

If it is decided to go ahead with a newsletter - and this should be discussed by the PIMC initially - its production should be given the resources required to sustain it. Starting and stopping newsletters is bad for the image of an organization.

Clearly, an electronic newsletter would be a good replacement for the present *Action Brief*. It should be simple and include few graphics to make it easy to download. Logically, the responsibility for the production should lie with the Communication and Public Information Unit, but this Unit does not appear to have the existing in-house staff resources to be able to produce it. Attempts should therefore be made to find an outsider to produce it, despite the difficulties that may be encountered.

2.1.15 Graphics for Presentations

There is a major demand for these. In a single week during the Consultant's presence in UNAIDS there were requests from staff for 300 slides/transparencies. More normally, there are requests for about 400 transparencies/slides a month. Graphics also need translations, most usually into French, Spanish, and Russian, and these are done through the Information Centre.

The problems with the Graphic Assistant post in the Information Centre have had serious repercussions, not only on production but also on morale.

2.1.16 Speeches by the Executive Director and other Senior Management

Obviously, the Executive Director has a personalized and central role in advocacy, for his high profile position gives him unique access to conferences, meetings, and media events. Minor events, for which talking points are prepared for him, averaged about one per month in the year May 1998 to April 1999. If one adds to these the major conferences, statements to the Programme Coordinating Board and the like, it is evident that a great deal of preparatory work is required.

Executive Directors and Directors General in the UN system, and also their equivalent in the private sector, normally have a speechwriter who is a member of their inner circle of management. That is to say, the speechwriter is privy to the policy discussions and decisions taken by the chief executive and his immediate team.

It is extremely difficult for a speechwriter to function adequately without an insider's knowledge of the top-level thinking in the organization. But even when this knowledge exists, executives and their speechwriters have a notoriously difficult working relationship. In effect, what normally happens is that, while there is one person in overall charge of writing speeches, the final versions usually include inputs from other members of the management team and/or some technical specialists.

Taking these considerations into account, it is usually not satisfactory to use outside writers for speeches. There is an evident need therefore for the Executive Director to have a regular, internal speechwriter who has access to the deliberations of his inner circle of management and the thinking of the Executive Director himself. Furthermore, this speechwriter could also work with other senior management staff to prepare their public statements. On this basis, it could be close to a full time job for a person.

Recommendation 5

A speechwriter should be recruited, primarily for the Executive Director, but to work also on speeches for other senior management. Given the common difficulties of establishing the necessary rapport between speechwriters and the executives who deliver the speeches, it would initially be appropriate to hire someone on 11-month basis, facilitating a change, or changes, if the first person(s) does not work out satisfactorily.

2.1.17 Budgeting Methods

Some years ago, FAO abolished the whole budget for its large Publications Division and spread the same total of funds among the technical divisions. These funds were then passed back to Publications Division in the form of contracted work. This was done because the governing bodies, ignorant of the resource-intensive nature of producing multilingual publications, and forgetful of FAO's key role as a source of global information on agriculture and rural development, were constantly complaining about the large budget of the Publications Division.

At present, the costs of producing materials are paid for jointly by the Information Centre and the requesting Department, or "client". In practice, the "client" pays for the printing while the Information Centre pays for the editorial work, translation, revising, design, etc.

There is nothing inherently wrong with such a system, and

indeed for cosmetic reasons organizations sometimes do not want the full cost of publications to be immediately evident.

However, there have been - and still are - flaws in the UNAIDS procedures that could attract the interest of auditors were they to come across them.

For quite some time after the Team Leader of the Information Centre assumed his post, WHO's administration paid invoices for UNAIDS printing without referring back to him. But the invoices were often higher than the original estimate – due to last minute changes etc. - and if the Information Centre did not see the invoices before WHO paid them, there was no way of checking whether the extra charges over and above the original estimate were justified. The Team Leader of the Information Centre managed to get that loophole blocked by having the WHO administration submit the invoices and payment requests to him to approve before WHO took action.

Now, however, there is still an irregularity in that the Team Leader of the Information Centre is signing off the invoices and payments requests for printing when they are being charged to the "client's" budget. It goes against normal UN practices for one staff member to sign off expenditures on a budget line for which he/she is not responsible. This situation also means that the "client" is not routinely informed of the actual cost of a printing contract and therefore has difficulty managing his/her own budget allocation properly. Finally, there appear to be problems in obligating funds ahead of time for the printing of publications.

There is a G-level post in the WHO administration that is paid for by UNAIDS to deal with publications, but it is not clear what that person's role is.

Recommendation 6

These budgeting issues should be looked into and a system introduced to provide the necessary transparency and information about actual printing costs to those whose budget allocations are being used. The system should also eliminate the practice of one staff member signing off on another's budget. The role of the G-level post being paid for in WHO's administration should be looked into and evaluated. Perhaps better use of the post could be achieved if the person worked part time in UNAIDS and part time in WHO.

2.2 Proposals for Greater Effectiveness in Publications

Essentially, there are six options, but they are not mutually exclusive:

a) Increase the strength and staff resources in the Information Centre to sustain at least the present levels of production.

b) Fix an annual ceiling of the number of pages that the Information Centre is expected to produce and to go on producing sustainably - without serious risk of error or staff burn out - and programme this production with the PIMC.

c) Actively promote decentralized reproduction in local languages, adaptation, and distribution of materials with fewer and more focussed

materials – primarily of a policy nature - produced centrally by the Programme.

d) Draw more on suitable materials produced by others – cosponsors, national AIDS programmes, NGOs, etc – and come to arrangements with them to produce and distribute them jointly, adding the UNAIDS logo on the cover to that of the original producer. Explore the possibilities of co-publishing with commercial publishers.

e) Take a new and different look at outsourcing.

f) Do nothing. Continue with the existing management by crisis and take the risk that there will be a serious mistake, failure to meet a deadline with a document, or even a total breakdown in the production system. (Disaffected external contractors could contribute to any of these failures).

Of these options, **f)** - to do nothing - is not a serious one. It has been included merely to illustrate the gravity of the situation.

2.2.1 Considerations in Respect of Option a)

Option **a)**, to increase the strength and staff resources in the Information Centre, would be highly desirable. If it could be decided to take this route, it would require at least the following.

- Upgrading to P5 of the post of the Team Leader. The responsibilities of the post fully justify this, as is shown by the grading of similar posts in other UN agencies. It would also provide the level of seniority required for its Team Leader to be a manager, with a position that gives his/her voice the proper weight in such a central activity as production and dissemination of information materials. This would be in contrast to the present situation where the Information Centre is widely regarded as being a mere provider of services, expected to jump at everyone's beck and call, whatever other work or priorities are in the mill. The erroneous belief that outsourcing is a panacea that calls for little work from the Information Centre probably aggravates this situation.

- The addition of a P4 English language editor. This person would edit materials and would also be responsible for the working contacts with outside editors and for revising their work.

- The addition of a G6 Administrative Clerk. This person would be responsible for contractual matters, budgeting, and the like. However, it could be that, after due examination, the G-level post in WHO paid for by UNAIDS could be better used to meet the needs of the Information Centre.

The addition of the editor post to that of the Team Leader and the existing Publications Coordinator (P3) would bring the professional strength of the Information Centre up to a total of three posts, still far, far fewer than is typical for the publications groups in the UN system in general. The existing short-term and casual staff would need to continue.

The Consultant appreciates that senior management is reluctant to increase core posts in the Programme because of possible resistance from cosponsors and donors. However, given the Programme's central role in advocacy and information dissemination, perhaps this resistance could be overcome.

But even if the resistance were overcome and the extra core staff for the Information Centre were approved, there would be a risk that would have to be guarded against: it could result in more of the same of what has been done in recent years. It could continue the supply-driven approach, and this would not be in the interests of an overall communication strategy under which, as already mentioned, the Programme's production of information materials should have a catalytic and positive impact in the process of reaching audiences that the Programme itself cannot hope to reach. And in this connection, it should be mentioned that the evaluation of the BPC, though generally favourable, showed that the highest number of criticisms of the BPC from the field staff concerned its lack of relevance to their specific circumstances.

A second-best alternative to creating posts of relatively long duration in the Information Centre would be to provide funds for short term posts, say an editor for 2-3 months, for peak periods in the workload of the Information Centre, e.g. during the preparation of materials for major conferences or World AIDS Day.

None if these options for strengthening the capacity of the Information Centre would reduce the need for in-house quality control of texts.

2.2.2 Considerations in Respect of Option b)

The idea of fixing a ceiling on the number of pages that the Information Centre is expected to produce in a year is more of an imperative than an option. For the sake of good order and proper programming by the PIMC, there should be a set level of output scheduled for the Information Centre, a level that it can sustain without running the risk of serious errors or lapses. At a meeting of key staff in the information and advocacy area with the Consultant, the figure of 2,500 pages a year was put forward tentatively by the Information Centre Team Leader, assuming that the Centre continued at its present staffing level of two professional posts. A level of 2,500 pages would represent a reduction of about 30 percent over the 1999 output, but as has been mentioned on more than one occasion in this report, the level of 1999 output is quite simply unsustainable with present staff resources.

The Consultant does not consider that he can arrive at an actual figure to propose because there are so many variables involved. For example, will the Programme decide to strengthen the staff of the Information Centre as just proposed in this report? How will the replacement for the Team Leader of the Information Centre work out and what will be his/her capacity to manage outsourcing? And how will the improved procedures and scheduling foreseen as a result of the setting up of the PIMC enhance potential output?

The level of output should, of course, be set in the light of past experience, the need for centrally produced materials, staff resources, in-house quality control capacity, etc. Determining the level should be a task of the PIMC, which would then submit its proposal to senior management for approval. The level should be reviewed at the end of the first full year of experience and revised up or down on the basis of that review.

2.2.3 Considerations in Respect of Option c)

The idea of decentralization is <u>not</u> simply to outsource the production of central Programme publications to points far away from Geneva; that would aggravate rather than solve the existing problems. Rather, the concept has three elements:

- The reproduction and distribution of materials at the country, or small group of countries, level, but translated into the local language(s)

- The adaptation of UNAIDS materials to make them more relevant to national conditions and needs – in addition to language, of course

- A deliberate and planned reduction in the quantity of materials produced in HQ, within the context of a publications policy and communication strategy that sets priorities and focuses more clearly on supporting key objectives in the Programme's work

The notion of reducing the production at the central level may encounter resistance. However, the Consultant believes that less but better focussed materials, which obtain much wider distribution in a form that meets local language needs and other local circumstances, would have more impact than the present system. For this produces a vast amount of information that is thinly distributed and accessible to relatively few people.

> *'I only received one copy of the BP Summary Booklet from Geneva. I cover more than 20 countries and I am not letting it out of my hands to anyone!'*
>
> **Comment by a CPA**

These ideas are not in fact new; decentralization was discussed on several occasions in the BP Task Force and found to be a good approach, but not enough has been done to pursue it.

There is now widespread support for the decentralization proposal in UNAIDS Geneva and in the field. Furthermore, it has already been started in China where, with annual seed money of US$ 10,000 from CPP, translations of Programme material into Chinese is being done, some of it by the Ministry of Health itself. One publication per month (2,000) copies is being produced. And WAC materials in Chinese on CD-ROMs are being produced at a cost of US$0.50 per copy. The result is that WAC materials are in evidence almost everywhere.

In Malaysia too, the process has begun. The Imam case study has been translated into Bahasa and 10,000 copies printed. It has immediate potential for distribution in Indonesia too.

The CPA in Uganda informed the Consultant that she was fully in favour of decentralizing, and that it would be relatively easy, for UNDP has recently donated a complete publications production unit to the Ministry of Health. In addition, she believed there were certain NGOs with production capacity.

The CPA in Malawi also supported the idea strongly and said that it could be promoted there, for the facilities exist. However, she had not had the chance to focus on it as yet.

The CPA in Indonesia commented that translation of BP material relevant to the country is a must, at least for his country of assignment. UNAIDS should facilitate the process. Printing locally is not a problem and is cheap. Provision of material on CD-ROM would be very helpful. He added that there is a great deal of Good Practice material available in Indonesia and in other countries. There was scope to have this material written up, printed, and distributed locally. Given the usefulness of the Malaysian version of the Imam case study in Indonesia too, he expressed the opinion that the regionalization of BP materials could perhaps be a task for the Intercountry Teams.

In fact, the Information Support Manager in Bangkok had already told the Consultant that he was convinced that in Asia, the potential for re-producing in local languages and adaptation to local needs was enormous. Almost all of the countries could do reproduction in local languages, though adaptation of UNAIDS material to local needs and conditions would perhaps only be possible in Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam, for the moment.

Finally, it should be noted that some years back, UNICEF adopted a policy of promoting the in-country production of materials, and it has been very successful.

The **advantages** of decentralizing for reproduction in local languages and for adaptation would be:

> **Part of Telephone Conversation between the Consultant and the CPA, Uganda**
>
> **Consultant**: *One thing I would like to talk to you about is the idea of proposing that production of information materials be decentralized.*
>
> **CPA: (immediate response)**: *Ah, yes! To make them more relevant.*

- To have materials that are more locally relevant

- To obtain much wider distribution within countries

- To help to build up national capacity in materials production

- To help to reach audiences that the Programme itself cannot ever hope to reach, even down to the community level, thus contributing to an overall communication strategy to fight HIV/AIDS

- To allow Geneva to focus better and reduce its publishing load, including staff time spent on clearing publications.

The immediate **issues to be addressed** would be:

- The need for resources to cover start up and some ongoing costs

- Quality control of locally reproduced or adapted materials

With regard to **resources and implementing a decentralization process,** a main reason for it not having taken place so far is that no resources were specifically made available for it.

The implementation of the process should involve:

- The Information Centre

- CPP

- The Intercountry Teams, and especially their information and communication specialists

The Information Centre should recruit a short-term adviser for 8-9 months to spearhead and coordinate the initiative. He/she should have travel funds to allow for visits to the Intercountry Teams and to go with their appropriate staff to selected countries in their region for discussions with the CPA and with possible institutions that could be helped to become the main Information Support Centres.

Discussions would also be necessary to determine whether such a Support Centre should be working only for its home country or whether there were any neighbouring

countries with similar enough conditions and needs to be able to use the materials produced.

CPP would assist in the selection of countries in which to begin and would be required to come up with the necessary seed money. In China, it seems that US$ 10,000 per year proved appropriate, but the figure would need to be tailored to the specific possibilities and needs. Perhaps a ceiling per country, say US$ 25,000, should be set.

The in-country assessments would also need to look into the question of any training required, for example in writing BP material. Short practical workshops would be planned. In the experience of the Consultant, it is preferable to have 2-3 short workshops rather than one longer one. After each short training period, of say 4-5 days, the trainer agrees a three-month work programme with the trainees and tells them that he/she will be returning at the end of that period to conduct a participatory group review of how they have progressed. That group critical review of the work they have produced is accompanied by any remedial training required.

The cost elements involved in launching this decentralization initiative would therefore comprise:

- The Geneva-based consultant, with travel funds
- Possible additional travel funds for the Intercountry information and communication staff
- US$ 10,000-25,000 of seed funds for each country selected

It would be appropriate to begin with a select number of countries and track their progress.

With regard to **quality control** of publications produced under decentralization, it would be impossible for UNAIDS Geneva to exercise the sort of quality control that it now does for BPC because: firstly, the volume of materials would be too great; and secondly, because documents could well be in languages of which there was no knowledge in the Programme in Geneva. Quality control would therefore be at the country level.

It should be emphasized that decentralization as outlined above would need to involve the combined efforts of CPAs, ICTs, cosponsors and regional partners. For many of these, decentralization would be breaking new ground, and therefore the proposal presented here would be a major challenge to the entire UNAIDS programme. But the Consultant is convinced that the results of meeting the challenge would make the effort worthwhile.

2.2.4 Considerations in Respect of Option d)

Identifying suitable materials produced by others and reproducing them as joint UNAIDS/originator documents has its attractions. In fact, it seems possible that the Programme does not necessarily have to originate or commission so many of the publications it produces. And it is for this reason that one recommendation of this report is that departments making proposals for a publication to the PIMC should include information about already existing publication on the same topic.

In respect of publication activities by the Programme's cosponsors, there appears to be no system for tracking what they are, or could be, publishing that is related to HIV/AIDS. What is required is an editorial consultative process with those responsible for

publications in the cosponsoring agencies. This could be achieved through virtual meetings on a regular basis during which the Team Leader of the Information Centre would share the Programme's publication plans with appropriate colleagues in the cosponsoring agencies and discuss with them what they were doing, or could be doing, that would complement and reinforce the Programme's publication efforts.

In principle, at least, each staff member with responsibility for a certain subject matter should be able to find out from his peers working in the same field what other materials exist. It should be his responsibility to obtain copies of those that might lend themselves to becoming a joint document.

If it is agreed by the PIMC that this is a sound option for a particular existing publication, the Information Centre should enter into negotiation with the producer with a view to making it a joint publication with UNAIDS logo and that of the producer on it. A joint distribution programme would also be agreed.

If this approach were to be adopted, it would need to be decided, on a case-by-case basis, whether UNAIDS or the originator of the document would do the translations and actual production. Care would be required to ensure that the Information Centre did not become further burdened by such joint operations.

It should be noted that publishing with cosponsors has its problems, especially when it comes to clearance and design issues. Apart from the cases provided in Annexe 3, there was a five-week delay in producing *Voluntary Counselling and Testing* because WHO insisted that it had not seen the text, when in fact it had. The result of the subsequent consultation and five weeks of lost time was the changing of two words in the subtitle.

Co-publishing with commercial publishers is worth exploring, though such ventures can be problematic. Copyright and royalty issues immediately come to mind. Nevertheless, major educational publishers could be interested. And their distribution systems would certainly be an advantage.

2.2.5 Considerations in Respect of Option e)

As already noted, outsourcing is a not a panacea to in-house shortages of staff, for outsourcing requires large amounts of staff time for contracting, managing, and controlling the work of service providers.

However, there are certain types of service which, once set up, do not require constant management and supervision. One of these in the Information Centre could well be the storage of publications and their distribution. The Consultant did not have the time to ascertain what, if any, services of this sort are available in Geneva, but they certainly exist in other European cities (e.g. Amsterdam) and are used by commercial organizations, for example for promotional materials.

The matter should be looked into in Geneva. Aspects to take into particular account would be the responsibility for the mailing lists and their constant updating and the costs of an outside contract compared to the existing system, which dispatches via WHO.

The Consultant understands that there have been proposals made to outsource services such as editing, translating, design, printing, etc. to places far away from Geneva, and in particular to developing countries. The Consultant believes that this would merely add to the almost overwhelming problems of the present outsourcing of

these services and it should therefore not be promoted, at least while the existing pressure on the Information Centre continues. Furthermore, one attempt to have translations done in developing countries ran into serious problems of work quality.

Recommendation 7

The Consultant recommends a range of measures that take some elements from all of the serious options discussed above, but with the main emphasis on Option c) – decentralization. At the same time, however, he urges UNAIDS to adopt and build on the earlier recommendation for the setting up of the Programme Information Materials Committee (PIMC).

The purpose of what follows in this recommendation is most certainly not too establish a rigid and bureaucratic system; common sense and reasonable flexibility should always feature, but much more order and rationality in the decisions and procedures should exist than they do at present.

Specifically, the recommendations for staffing and a more rational *modus operandi* are as follow:

Staffing in the Information Centre

- The staff of the Information Centre should be strengthened by the addition of a post for an Editor (English language) and a post for an Administrative Assistant at high GS level.[3] This strengthening is essential even to make the existing level of production sustainable. The post of the Team Leader of the Information Centre should be upgraded to P5 for the reasons given earlier.

Rationalizing the Work of the Information Centre

- In conjunction with the Team Leader, the PIMC should agree on the total number of pages/documents that can be produced in a year, sustainably over time, with whatever staff resources are available.

- The PIMC should try to establish levels of importance, and therefore treatment, for the Programme's publications. For example, is it really necessary to print meeting reports or could some or all of them, also in the interests of speed, be photocopied and sent out with a simpler cover?

- The PIMC should solicit requests for publications from the various departments at the beginning of the year and should consider additions and cancellations at its quarterly meetings. Extraordinary meetings of the PIMC should be called by its chairperson at the request of the Team Leader of the Information Centre should a crisis or logjam occur that requires a policy decision to decide on the priorities.

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[3] The existing Administrative Assistant post (G6) in the Information Centre was divided into two junior posts. The Information Centre needs these posts as well. It is possible, however, that the tasks of the GS administrative post in WHO could be redefined to provide direct support to the Information Centre.

- Proposals to the PIMC for document production should specify the target audience, the purpose, and in addition provide information about other existing publications on the same topic, and why UNAIDS should produce another.

Setting Priorities and Programming Production

- The PIMC should identify the relatively few documents that are absolutely essential and have deadlines by which they simply <u>must</u> be available e.g. major conferences, World AIDS Day, and put them at the top of the list of Number 1 priorities. Other proposed documents that the PIMC agrees are essential should also be included in that list of Number 1 priorities.

- The rest of the proposals should go into a list of Number 2 priorities and be given an order of importance insofar as possible.

- The PIMC should only programme about 80 per cent of the agreed total pages that can be produced in a year, leaving the remaining 20 per cent of flexibility for the inevitable unforeseen but important requests. Experience will show whether this 20 per cent of flexibility is sufficient, but if it goes much above that, there would be a significant return to the anarchy of the present situation.

- At its quarterly meetings, the PIMC should review the progress being made with the production of publications and take decisions regarding priorities and any rescheduling that may be necessary.

- Submission of summary proposals for projects to the Programme Review Committee should include any expected production of publication(s) so that they can be planned for by the PIMC.

Decentralizing Reproduction and Local Adaptation

- Decentralization for reproduction in local languages and for adaptation to local conditions - on country or small group of country basis - should be actively promoted. It should begin in a few pilot countries. Resources should be provided for a consultant with travel funds to work with the Intercountry Teams and visit countries where there is a potential to start the operation and also to provide seed money to the local institutions.

- The Programme should not attempt any quality control in Geneva on decentralized reproduction/adaptation. There should be quality control within the country. This should be done by the CPA and the National AIDS Programme. Lengthy and bureaucratic in-country clearance processes, which could stultify the process, should be avoided.

- Materials adapted from information in documents produced in Geneva should be allowed to use the UNAIDS logo. But there should be a bold disclaimer next to it stating that the publication is based on information from UNAIDS but that the content is the responsibility of whoever produced it. The PIMC should establish the precise policy, and the most appropriate wording for the disclaimer.

<u>Adoption of Documents Originated by Others and Co-Publishing</u>

- There should be more systematic efforts to identify suitable existing documents that could be 'adopted' by the Programme, given its logo, and distributed jointly with the original producer. Co-publishing with commercial educational publishers, especially those with good distribution networks, should be looked into.

- Regular electronic consultations should be established between the Team Leader of the Information Centre and appropriate publication colleagues in the cosponsoring organizations to share information about publication plans and to look for complementarity and reinforcement.

<u>Outsourcing</u>

- The possibility of contracting out the storage and distribution of publications should be explored. Pressure to outsource editorial and printing services to developing countries should be resisted as long as the heavy workload in the Information Centre persists.

<u>Responsibility for Design related to Corporate Image</u>

- The Manager, Communication and Public Information (EXR), as the person responsible for the corporate image of the Programme, should be referred to and have the final decision in respect of any request for departures from the standard design or format of UNAIDS documents.

3. QUALITY CONTROL

3.1 The Missing Editors

In most organizations with significant publication programmes, there are in-house language editors with accumulated knowledge of the organization's subject matter. They ensure cogency, clarity, consistency, and correct house style, and they are also the principal stones in the bulwark against errors, distortions, or misrepresentations in documents. But the Programme has no in-house editors as such, though the Team Leader of the Information Centre and the Editor/Communications Officer (P5) in EXR do a considerable amount of editing and quality control during both working and what would normally be considered non-working time.

The bulk of the Programme's editing work is contracted out to a list of editors that has been built up by the Information Centre. Some of them have acquired good knowledge of HIV/AIDS and its ramifications and raise numerous substantive queries about the texts they are working on. Thus they have become an important resource to the Programme, but they are outsiders and are not always available when needed, effectively leaving a hole in the quality control capacity.

It can be hoped that as the Programme implements policies and procedures that will improve scheduling and planning of publications, it will be possible to advise editors earlier - and other outside service providers too - of pending work in order to fix their availability better. But this also needs to be followed up by on-schedule delivery of the text to them. In effect, using outside contractors is, by its nature, more sensitive to timing than is using in-house resources. In simple terms, an in-house editor can be told to

change a priority in his/her work schedule to meet some new deadline, whereas outside editors working regularly for multiple clients can hardly be asked to make such changes.

The quality control system that has been established relies heavily on an *ad hoc* use of 'volunteers' and casually available people e.g. staff members of PAHO for Spanish texts, or a part-time Russian mother-tongue secretary in CPP who is contracted to check Russian texts. Of course, the relevant subject-matter specialists and their team leaders are also expected to check and approve texts, which is normal practice in all organizations.

As could be expected with such a system, and with such a large output, quality control is not perfect. Thus, it is not unusual to find some typographical and other errors in Programme publications.

Evidently, the Programme cannot consider at this time the creation of an editorial and publications group with the staffing that one would normally expect for the output it achieves. This would require at least an English and French editor in addition to existing professional staff, but the Consultant has limited his recommendation in this report only to an English language editor because of the Programme's restrictions on staffing. Contracting outsiders on a regular basis for quality control functions is not really a practical option, given the work's sporadic nature and the knowledge of the Programme that it requires.

3.2   Aiming for 100 Percent Perfection

A general point worth noting is that there is a tendency in the Programme to seek 100 percent perfection in a publication. While perfectionism is in many ways praiseworthy, it does have a major incidence on scheduling because of the last minute corrections it entails. It also adds to costs. While not in any way underestimating the vital importance of quality control in the Programme's information output, serious questions need to be addressed about the justification and value of always aiming for 100 percent. The PIMC should study this point and propose appropriate policy guidelines. Clearly, typographical errors and other faults that will be immediately evident to readers are not included in this discussion.

3.3   Quality Control for Selected Publications from the BPC

The Best Practice Review Committee (BPRC) only examines *Technical Updates* and *Points if View*, plus any other texts that a Team Leader considers it should see. It does not normally review the so-called Key Materials unless they are submitted to it.

Even so, the BPRC is frankly overloaded. It is normally expected to meet once a week and to have carefully read a quite a large quantity of text before coming together to pass judgement on where it needs to be corrected or modified.

Several members of the BPRC frankly admitted that they did not have the time to prepare for its meetings properly and that it was expected to review too much material. However, it seems that the BPRC is an important forum for its members to express their views on Programme policies that come to light as they review BP materials. So to abolish it and look for another quality control system, perhaps based only on peer group review, would probably be counterproductive.

3.4 Quality Control of other High-Profile Publications

There is no established mechanism, similar to the Best Practice Review Committee, to deal with quality control of other high-profile publications. It is much more of an ad-hoc process, but in effect it has become a core function of the Editor/Communications Officer post (P5) in EXR, supported by other staff members on a case by case basis and when their specific technical or policy knowledge is required.

Recommendation 8

A potential solution to providing quality control in a more systematic way would be to bring together those with expertise in writing and publishing, and with direct responsibilities for information and advocacy in the Programme, into an embryonic quality control advisory group. If it proved successful, its functions could be formalized at a later date. Such a group would obviously need to include professional staff from EXR and the Information Centre, plus others such as the Writer, BPC in PSR, the recently-recruited writer in EXR, and any speechwriter appointed in the future for the Executive Director and other senior management.

The Consultant also recommends that staff in general, from the moment when they see a first draft of a future publication, and at every stage at which they see it thereafter, pay the utmost attention to reading it carefully, critically assessing its cogency, clarity, and consistency, as well as its technical content.

4. DISTRIBUTION

4.1 A Key Area

The Programme's mailing list for publications includes 1,300 names, and the print run for most publications is 3,000 in English, 2,000 in French, and 1,000 in Spanish. If one compares this with the 10,000 copies of the Imam case study recently printed in Malaysia in Bahasa, for use in one country though with possible spin off in Indonesia, one begins to get a sense of the relatively small outreach of the Programme's centrally produced and distributed materials. It is not unfair to say that the effort that goes into producing those publications is not commensurate with the exposure they get. This is a major reason for the recommendation in this report in favour of decentralization.

Given this situation, what can be done to improve it? Much has been said and written about using multipliers in the field. Logically, this refers to CPAs and Theme Group members in the first instance. In fact, the Evaluation of the BPC showed that some field staff do indeed make a point of distributing the information they receive whenever they can.

However, in addition to straightforward distribution, there are other methods that should be used to disseminate UNAIDS thinking, policy guidance, and case study experience. For example, when a new publication is received in a country, the CPA could call a small press conference of local journalists to discuss the issues it raises.

However, disseminating information through any means is not a core function of a CPA's work, for it is not included in the terms of reference for CPA posts. Nor is the contribution of staff in general in the area if advocacy and information included in the staff appraisal process.

Recommendation 9

Information dissemination and multiplying of UNAIDS materials should be included in the terms of reference of CPAs. And the staff appraisal process should include a question about what the person has done to assist advocacy and information dissemination.

4.2   The Mailing List Conundrum

Good and very frequently updated mailing lists are the basis of effective distribution. Yet, according to staff in the Programme, this is a weak area. At present each department has the responsibility for updating its part of the mailing list, but with 50 subject areas, it calls for even greater inputs from responsible staff, and they are probably overworked already. Another problem is that there is no focal point that takes responsibility for mailing lists and their updating. It seems that there is also a tendency for some groups to build up their own mailing lists and not share them with the rest of the Programme.

As already discussed in this report, mailing lists and distribution could perhaps be contracted out. Alternatively, consultants could be brought in to help. But whatever solution is adopted, it will always be the staff of the Programme who have to feed the system, for only they know which of their contacts should be receiving certain materials.

Staff also complain about the present software that is being used for the mailing lists, In particular, they state that it does not weed out duplicate entries when a person's name appears under two categories, so that in effect that person receives two copies of a publication.

However, a discussion with the Information Technology group showed that people who made that complaint were not using the software correctly. If one selects <u>all</u> of the categories one requires <u>at the same time</u> and then prints the labels, the same names that appear under different categories are weeded out and only one address label is printed. The error of duplicate labels occurs when each category is selected separately and printed out.

However, new software for the mailing list database is to be introduced early next year that will facilitate operations. But the essential problem is not the software; it is what staff do to feed the system and update it.

Recommendation 10

The PIMC should issue guidelines to staff on the role of each and every person in supporting the creation and maintenance of a good mailing list, pointing out that without it, much of the effort in producing information materials is wasted. If at all possible, the PIMC should also create a focal point of responsibility for the mailing lists.

Annexe 1

TERMS OF REFERENCE

<u>COLIN FRASER</u>

Consultancy to review the advocacy and information functions of UNAIDS, with particular reference to the initiation, development, production, publication and distribution of materials

The publication and information programmes of UNAIDS are successful. The involvement of all departments in the programme and their continued growth mean that more resources need to be found and focused optimally to ensure their continued success. Thus, under the supervision of the Director, External Relations, the Manager, Communication and Public Information, Robert Hecht and Werasit Sittitrai, both Associate Directors, Policy, Strategy and Research, and in consultation in particular with the Information Manager but also all relevant departments, the consultant will:

- Undertake a review of materials and electronic publications currently produced by UNAIDS including advocacy reports, public information and press materials, speeches, articles, newsletters, graphics, briefs, policy and position papers, and the Best Practice Collection series, with a view to quantifying their volume and identifying the nature and speed of the work involved in their creation, production and distribution; in addition, determine the likely future trend of demand for production

- Undertake a programme-wide review of capacity to undertake UNAIDS advocacy and information functions, identifying staffing levels, responsibilities currently carried out by core and short-term staff and time spent on different functions, levels of outsourcing, use of consultants etc.

- Review the decision-making processes currently in use, from authorization to clearance of texts and including quality-control procedures, to determine (a) whether and how information should be processed and published; and (b) their appropriateness at the various stages of the production process

- Undertake a review of budgetary processes and sources of funds for production (including translation, editing, and desk-top publishing), publication and distribution of materials

- Review briefings, minutes and other relevant information, including existing evaluations, and attend meetings on information and knowledge management within UNAIDS as relevant during the contract period.

On the basis of an analysis of all of the above, present a report with recommendations on the prioritization and streamlining of functions and processes in the areas reviewed and on the optimal use of financial and human resources (internal and external) including considerations on structure and reporting lines as appropriate. The consultant

may also draw on the experience of other international organizations and UNAIDS Cosponsors to identify relevant procedures and practices.

The output will be a report with recommendations as well as a presentation to the senior management of UNAIDS.

The expected duration of this contract is 4 weeks.

<div align="right">**Annexe 2**</div>

List of UNAIDS Staff Consulted during the Assignment

Office of Executive Director

Peter Piot, Executive Director

Department of External Relations

Bernard Fery, Director a.i.,

Anne Winter, Manager, Communication and Public Information

Suzanne Cherney, Editor/Communications Officer

Edward Vela, External Relations Officer

Calle Almedal, Senior NGO Liason Officer

Manisha Bharti, World AIDS Campaign Focal Point

Lisa Jacobs, Press Officer

Department of Policy, Strategy, and Research

Awa Coll-Seck, Director

Robert Hecht, Associate Director

David FitzSimmons, Team Leader, Information Centre

Andrea Verwohlt, Publications Coordinator, Information Centre

Andrew Wilson, Best Practice Writing and Training

Tina Boonto, Coordinator, Best Practice Collection

Pradeep Kumar, Team Leader, Information Technology

Jason Kanarr, Webmaster, Information Technology

David Miller, Psychosocial Advisor, Care and Support Team

Michel Carael, Leader, Prevention Team

Bunmi Makinwa, Communication Adviser

Department of Country Planning and Programme Development

Mes Grunitzky-Bekele, Associate Director

Gunilla Ernberg, Coordinator, Management

Nina Ferencic, Programme Development Officer, Latin America

Programme Development and Coordination Group

James Sherry, Director

Bernard Schwartl™nder, Leader, Evaluation and Monitoring Team/Epidemiology Team

Joel Rehnstrom, Monitoring and Evaluation Adviser

Programme Support Department

Georges Shaw, Budget and Finance Officer

Country and Intercountry Level

David Bridger, Information Support Manager, Asia-Pacific (by 'phone)

Peggy McEvoy, CPA, Caribbean (by 'phone)

Agathe Lawson, CPA Uganda (by 'phone)

Angela Trenton-Mbonde, CPA Malawi (by 'phone)

George Lothe, CPA Indonesia (by e-mail)

Annexe 3

SOME ILLUSTRATIVE CASE STUDIES OF DOCUMENT PRODUCTION

Case 1. Learned Lessons from the Production of the EPI Report[4]

The production process for the EPI report was painful and showed up a number of weaknesses in the UNAIDS system and structure which need to be addressed. The object of this note is to highlight the problems that occurred with a view to promoting constructive discussion on how some of these issues might be resolved in the future.

The Problem

Despite a detailed planning process that began in February, the report would not have been ready in time for the conference if it had not been for a) a number of staff in EXR and PSR working double time for several weeks in order to get it out and b) the extraordinary commitment of our external partners who also worked day and night to meet the deadlines. For example, the graphic designer and his team who were responsible for preparing the report in camera-ready form put in more than 600 hours over and above the estimated time of preparation. This of course was not without cost to UNAIDS. The original estimate for the work, based on 100 hours and an allowance for a reasonable number of changes to be made, came to SFr.12,500. The final amount charged was SFr. 68,500.

The most problematic aspect of the production was the exceptionally high level of changes made right up until even after the printing films had been produced. One issue that this raises immediately is that of the pursuit of perfection vs. the financial and other costs of making changes at a very late stage and of delaying production.

The original draft text of the report was produced for 9 April and circulated for comment and clearance in UNAIDS. This process took three weeks and a second draft was submitted by the consultant writer on 29 April. This was followed by one week of final editing, rewriting, etc. in-house before the text was submitted to the designer on 5 May, the scheduled deadline. Four weeks were therefore allowed for correction and clearance of the text. This time, however, proved to be insufficient in that, in the event, the material submitted to the designer was still far from being final and more work was required on the second draft than had been anticipated to incorporate the different comments received.

This then was one of the reasons for the very high level of corrections that occurred subsequently.

A second source of problems was that a large number of conflicting demands were being made on the same staff members over the period earmarked for editing and revision of the report. In addition to the EPI report, there were the press materials for the WAC launch in Moscow to complete and other materials for the World AIDS Conference. In addition, a large number of documents for the PCB including the biennial progress report were being prepared at the same time. Finally, a number of

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[4] Original version shortened by the Consultant.

best practice documents also needed to be ready in time for the PCB. All this work fell essentially on the same people.

Translation

In the planning process it was noted that the translation period for the report would fall at the same time as preparations for the PCB and the World Health Assembly. EXR therefore proposed that additional translators should be hired for the period and offered to pay part of the costs. This proposal was not taken up as it was thought that the WHO services would be adequate.

In the event, translation services for the report (which represented about five weeks work per language version at the customary work rate of WHO translators) were not organized, with the result that additional translators had to be identified at the last minute by EXR. Once the final English text was virtually ready, several days were lost on one of the language editions because of the problem of translators not being available.

Major problems occurred with one of the language versions of the report: a) the quality of the translation was poor b) parts of the report were not translated at all c) WHO was unwilling to incorporate the changes made by those reviewing the translation d) WHO would not undertake to harmonize the texts received from the different translators. The burden of all this additional work therefore fell on EXR.

Revision of Translation, Editing, and Proof-Reading

Much of the same problems that applied to translation also applied to the revision of translations, editing and proof-reading. Again, EXR had to take on the task of identifying editors and proof-readers in the different languages at the last minute, also by asking different staff members in the programme (PSR and CPP) and friends to help out.

Conclusion

It is not possible to continue to produce reports of this nature based on a system in which staff members are doing this in their "spare time", i.e. at nights and weekends, because of a totally inadequate capacity within the programme.

There is no one person in the Programme who takes overall responsibility for ensuring that a publication of acceptable standard is produced on time. This, coupled with the fact that the majority of people working on any publication are either external contractors or WHO employees and that there is no capacity in-house to take things in hand if they go wrong, means that the whole operation is permanently in danger of running off the rails. In short, the current approach is one based on crisis management and on the good will of staff and our external collaborators - a good will that is, in a number of instances, fast disappearing because of the conditions of work imposed by the Programme. The issue then of specific responsibility for publications management needs to be revisited as well as the issue of programme capacity in this area both at the professional and general service levels.

Similarly, with editors and proof-readers, reliable sources of services are currently often unavailable at critical times. Different options regarding possible contractual arrangements may therefore need to be explored in order to secure the required services when needed. At present, the revision of translations is also done on an ad hoc basis in the Programme with, most frequently, staff members being asked to do the work informally. This places a heavy burden on a few individuals without there being any acknowledgement of the time they spend.

The current division of responsibility between departments for the production of publications does not always function well. The involvement of many staff members with different supervisors and lines of reporting, without there being ultimately any overall accountability, is problematic. In addition, there is frequently confusion about the sources of funding for different aspects of the process without there apparently being any consistent cross-programme approach to this.

Cross-departmental and even cross-sectional planning within departments does not work well. Given the very limited capacity of the Programme, this quickly results in a major workload of the system and a situation in which certain individuals are stretched way beyond what it is reasonable to expect of them.

It is agreed by all those who have been involved in this process that there is a need to discuss these issues and any related concerns and points of view that others may wish to raise or that I may have omitted to mention. It is hoped then that a process can be set up to do this over the next few weeks with a view to finding some solutions to the problems.

This note has dwelt on the difficulties. As stated in the beginning, however, the effort to improve work processes should not detract from acknowledgement of the exceptionally hard work done by many in very difficult conditions which made the success of the report possible.

Anne Winter

17 July 1998

Case 2.   A Joint Publication[5]

P Day minus 81[6]   A 156-page (49,000-word) unedited document is received by the Information Centre with its clearance for publication (Document Production Form) 81 days before it is required for a conference. The intention is to publish the English version in time for the conference with a French translation in photocopied format, since the translation alone would require 7 weeks.

P Day minus 79   An outside editor - one of the best and also one of the few available at that time – is identified, negotiated with and contracted within 2 days. She

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[5] This and the next case study were written up by the Consultant from material provided by the Information Centre

[6] Publication Day. The remaining number of days cited are calendar days, not working days. This seems to be a fair way of presenting the information, since work at night and at weekends seems to be the norm, though of course it should not be for a sustainable operation.

accepts a very rapid turn-around of 35 days, and she actually delivers the edited text four days earlier than agreed, even doing it over her holidays.

P Day minus 48   The edited text, with a number if queries raised by the editor, is given to the appropriate staff in UNAIDS to obtain clarification in respect of the queries; the modifications are incorporated electronically into the text. This whole operation takes 21 days.

P Day minus 27   The final text in English is ready for translation. The Information Centre makes a print-out of this final text for a high-level meeting with the publication partner 3 days later.

P Day minus 24   At the high level meeting, the partner insists on having the final printed copies of both English and French for any launch. The launch date is postponed to coincide with another conference. The deadline is still tight, but just feasible for translation, DTP, production and delivery to the city where the conference is to be held. However, pre-publication copies are always needed for journalists, squeezing the deadline to nine days before the conference, and giving a new effective deadline of 63 days for the publication in both languages from the time of the high-level meeting.

P Day minus 63   During the high-level discussions between UNAIDS and the partner, UNAIDS' senior management offers flexibility on the design and size of the publication. It emerges that the partner has not studied the final text, and translation cannot start until it has been reviewed and approved by them.

P Day minus 59   The approved text is returned by the partner and it is passed to translators for French version, as well as for a Russian version for publication later. In the following three weeks, meetings and discussions over design continue with the partner, involving senior staff from both organizations. The partner insists on its own design and size with four-colour printing. But time is running out; for the design will take time and the designer needs an agreed format to work on; and the printer also needs to know the size to be able to reserve appropriate machines and order the right paper.

Agreement on these issues is finally reached only 32 days before the publication is due.

P Day minus 32   DTP of the English version starts.

P Day minus 26   Designer delivers the first complete layout.

P Day minus 35   French translation is delivered and sent to the reviser and the partner. Questions raised by the translator have to be clarified with the author and modifications made to the English original.

P Day minus 21   Revised English DTP version is returned to designer for changes.

P Day minus 19   Further changes to English DTP version are submitted to the designer

P Day minus 19   Agreed texts for the Foreword and Acknowledgments in English are received.

P Day minus 19   Revised French translation is received and sent for DTP.

P Day minus 18 to Publication Day   Translation and revision of Acknowledgements and Foreword; final revision of English layout prior to printing; revision of French layout; checking of printers' proofs of both French and English; production of cover texts, and proof reading; dispatch of documents in time for the conference.

Conclusions and Consultant's Comments

The English and French versions of a160-page book were produced on schedule for the conference under extreme time pressure and with many additional working hours and days. To give an idea of the time required for such an operation, <u>the revision and proof-reading of the French version alone took 160 person hours, without including the time spent on the actual translation</u>.

The 81 days originally set as the deadline for the work was already very short by any normal publishing standards, and especially so when having to depend on outside contractors. In the event, however, the outside contractors all delivered very punctually, some even ahead of the agreed time. The delays and complications arose within the Programme and its partner (e.g. three weeks to get the editor's queries answered and the related modifications introduced into the text, delays in the partner clearing the text, protracted discussions about design and size).

These internal delays appear to confirm comments made by Programme staff to the effect that the complications and resource-intensive nature of publishing are insufficiently understood, in this case within the partner organization as well. They also appear to confirm that the Information Centre lacks the institutional clout and respect it needs to be able to make its professional voice heard in management-level decisions that have serious repercussions for the completion of its assignments on time.

Case 3. Another Joint Publication

P Day minus 45 A planning meeting is held to discuss production of 38-page (14,000-word) document needed for a meeting in 45 days time. The meeting establishes a tight schedule with absolute deadlines for delivery of text, clearance by partners, and delivery of final laid-out text to printers. The cleared text is required for editing – over a long holiday weekend - by P Day minus 25; the edited text is to be returned for final clearance by the morning of P Day minus 17, be cleared, and go to the designer in the afternoon of the same day; the laid-out text is to go to the printer on P Day minus 11; the document to be delivered on P Day minus 4 for dispatch.

P Day minus 44 The Information Centre contacts designers and printers for estimates

P Day minus 16 Even though the original text is delivered late for editing, it still goes to the editor before the long holiday weekend and the edited version is returned on P Day minus 16, one day late. In the following days, massive changes are made to the text, figures, etc. and the partner wants a late change in the size of their logo. Tensions rise between the originators and the Information Centre, with the former insisting on further changes while the latter maintains that more changes will make production by the deadline impossible. In the event, the costs of the changes made to the first and second printer's proofs result in a 40% increase over the original quotations for design and layout.

P Day minus 10 The Document Production Form – the document that authorizes the Information Centre to proceed – is delivered, dated the previous day. In effect, the Information Centre has been commissioning work from the designer and printer without any formal or legal basis for doing so.

P Day minus 8   The originator gives instructions to increase the print run from 3,000 to 4,000 copies. The printer is only able to meet the request through a last minute change in the order for paper with his supplier.

P Day minus 3   The printer delivers advanced copies and they are dispatched to the site of the meeting.

P Day plus a few days   It is found that one figure in the document has been wrongly changed by the printer and the originator has recalculated two other figures. A corrigendum slip is prepared and inserted manually into all copies subsequently dispatched.

Conclusions and Comments by the Consultant

Trying to get this publication ready in such a sort timeframe was almost certain to be a major challenge. It was only met through long additional hours of work under great time pressure. In any organization that publishes to deadlines, there are bound to be occasions that call for this sort of commitment and for high tolerance to stress. But in a well-managed publications programme, which is following established policies and procedures properly, they should be occasional events. The Consultant's perception is that they occur far too often in the Programme. Obviously, originators want to have their publications come out right, but they should also understand the realities of those responsible for the editing and production processes, particularly when working to a deadline. And they should understand that their role in the process is to deliver the best possible text, revise it scrupulously after editing or translation, and thereafter make the minimum number of changes possible.   When publishing partners are involved, and when the Programme has the responsibility for actual production of a document, the Information Centre should be supported in politely refusing to make last minute design changes.